

APHIS, Plant Protection and Quarantine
(Various Locations)
Agriculturist, GS-401-13
(Working Title: State Plant Health Director)

SJ#: 4006
(May 2004)

INTRODUCTION

The incumbent serves as the State Plant Health Director (SPHD) with responsibility for APHIS scientific and administrative plant regulatory activities within the state(s). These activities include: pest and disease risk analysis; exclusion and prevention effective export certification program for plant products and animal by-products, design and implementation of survey programs for early pest detection, eradication of pest or disease outbreaks; and conducts regulatory programs for domestic pests. Responsible for preparation and response to intentional (bioterrorism) and non-intentional introductions of plant pests and disease.

Directs the state activities and sets priorities that balance consideration of public and industry demands against those of economics, efficiency and available resources. Serves as the primary point of contact for plant health protection and emergency management and response in the state.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Pest and Disease Risk Analysis

The SPHD is responsible for overseeing the identification of plant pest pathways through analysis and utilization of risk data. These pathways are used to develop and implement pest detection activities in the Cooperative Agriculture Pest Survey (CAPS) program and in domestic program management (e.g. imported fire ant, gypsy moth, grasshopper, etc). Interprets risk data to develop resource plans, prioritize work, and recommend project proposals to the Center for Plant Health, Science and Technology (CPHST). Communicates risk data and pathways to state and federal cooperators, stakeholders, and other organizations to educate and/or mitigate risk associated with invasive species.

Exclusion and Prevention

Incumbent contributes to effective outreach programs to importers, travelers and industry on importation requirements to facilitate trade and prevent introduction of plant and animal pests and diseases. Oversees effective permit and compliance program to mitigate risk at high risk containment facilities, soil laboratories, and plant pest permittee establishments. Implements safeguarding risk management measures to mitigate identified pest risk associated with imported commodities, including animal products and by-products in commerce. Ensures accurate and timely treatment of cargo as a condition of entry or due to identified infestation and makes certain Post Entry Quarantine (PEQ) program is functioning effectively. Establishes effective working relationships with Department of Homeland Security (DHS) at ports of entry to facilitate passenger/cargo/conveyance clearance. Provides resources for effective delivery of military cooperator training. Oversees collection and reporting of program data and ensures quality assurance measures are in place.

Manages and/or supervises identifier(s) who are tasked with identification, pathway and risk analyses and training responsibilities. Seeks technical feedback from National Identification Services (NIS) on identifier's performance and on their developmental needs.

Trade

Directs/administers federal export certification program for plants, plant products, and animal by-products within the state(s). Ensures individuals authorized to issue phytosanitary certificates meet international standards (education, training and experience). Endorses and recommends federal/state personnel for certification to issue phytosanitary certificates. Works with trade, commodity organizations, growers, state and federal officials to educate and inform on export requirements for meeting foreign country import requirements.

Administers accountable documents (certificates) and user fee collection which supports export certification activities. Hosts foreign delegations and responds to requests for technical information on the presence or absence of plant pests or diseases within the state(s). Supervises program within state to ensure technical accuracy as well as adherence to national standards.

Pest Detection and Rapid Response

Works cooperatively with State Plant Regulatory Officials (SPRO) to develop and document state emergency management plans. Ensures plans are tested and modified as necessary. Evaluates effectiveness of emergency response to specific pest outbreaks i.e., citrus canker, plum pox virus, etc. Coordinates, manages and oversees emergency response using the Incident Command System and may serve as the Incident Commander for pest programs in the state(s).

Use pest risk data to oversee, develop and implement timely detection surveys independently or cooperatively with SPROs and the CAPS committee. Approves state workplans and funding level for the CAPS cooperative agreement within the state(s). The incumbent is the Authorized Departmental Official Designated Representative (ADODR) on cooperative agreements in the state(s). Negotiates, manages and approves/denies required written and financial reports.

Ensures effective outreach to various parties instrumental in pest detection. Establishes/maintains cooperative relationships with land grant universities and other institutions such as National Plant Diagnostic Network and Cooperative State Research Education and Extension Services (CSREES). Serves on state pest survey and detection/control/eradication committees or task forces as appropriate.

Ensures target plant pests and diseases are identified promptly. Results are reported and appropriate measures applied to effectively respond to new pests using established response guidelines or ICS protocols/procedures.

Develops or implements innovative management and technology tools to enhance and facilitate pest detection and data collection e.g., geographical information systems (GIS), global positioning systems(GPS), modeling software, etc. Represents the agency at public forums and meetings on pest detection and emergency programs.

Invasive Species Management

Manages invasive species which are covered under APHIS regulation or through Congressional direction (budget language) which are harmful to agriculture or the environment, and determines strategies to control or manage invasive species based on risk and data analysis, chemical or biological control, and availability of funding. Activities may include survey, regulatory and control, interstate coordination and planning within PPQ, state departments of agriculture, universities, and other Federal agencies.

The SPHD is responsible for accomplishing program work within an allocated budget. The SPHD can opt to do the work internally (with PPQ resources/personnel) or by entering into a cooperative agreement with an organization best suited to do the work or through other methods.

As the ADODR, the SPHD administers domestic plant quarantines through the development and implementation of cooperative agreements. Plans, oversees and monitors financial management and program reporting, and reviews work accomplishments in order to authorize payment to the cooperators.

The incumbent is responsible for compliance with Federal, state and local pesticide regulations. The SPHD participates with APHIS' environmental services to develop general and/or site specific environmental assessments. Provides assistance in the preparation and revision of environmental impact statements. The SPHD must understand and implement mitigation measures to protect threatened and endangered species as well as other environmental concerns. When appropriate, environmental monitoring plans are developed and implemented to provide data to document the use of pesticides in the state program.

The position also has responsibility for data collection and trend analysis using GPS and GIS software. Data is analyzed to determine the range and density of target pests for decision making on pesticide application or alternative strategies to manage pest populations and determine potential impact.

As the Agency representative for PPQ within the state(s), the SPHD is responsible for outreach to the public, industry and grower organizations, extension agents, environmental groups, stakeholders, and other Federal and state agencies. Participates in public meetings, works with the State Department of Agriculture under parallel quarantines to gain access to private lands, and negotiates survey and/or pesticide application to Tribal lands.

Regulatory Compliance

Responsible for all administrative and programmatic activities complying with appropriate Federal and state regulations and guidelines. Knowledge of Federal grant and cooperative agreement regulations and guidelines. Ensures programs meet all Federal and state environmental regulatory requirements (NEPA, FIFRA). Selects appropriate methods to ensure regulatory compliance by providing public outreach, industry specific information, trade groups, etc. Determines when civil and criminal penalties to enforce APHIS regulations or less drastic actions such as a letter of warning are appropriate. Provides direction and documentation to Investigation and Enforcement Services (IES) to forward civil and criminal violations for

adjudication. Works with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) the Safeguarding, Intervention and Trade Compliance (SITC) program to determine when and where to monitor import regulatory compliance as well as to detect smuggling activities within the assigned state(s).

Selects methods for compliance by educating regulated entities and placing them under compliance agreements to self-regulate, or when entity is not receptive, directly regulates them by program officials. Coordinates and delegates authority to carry out Federal regulations to state or local officials MOUs and cooperative agreements.

Certifies facilities and businesses that meet criteria to conduct APHIS regulatory treatments and oversees inspection or certification of containment facilities, soil labs, biotech, and export compliance. Monitors permits for compliance with regulations and permit conditions, e.g., post entry, plant pests, biotech, and plant products with limited distribution restrictions. Reviews applications for permits to determine/concur with permitting decisions.

Resource Management

The incumbent manages all facets of personnel, finance and property management for the assigned state(s).

Personnel: Supervises a staff comprised of professional, technical and administrative personnel. Determines effective recruitment strategies, i.e. job fairs, hiring incentives, agency scholarships, and all methods of effective outreach. Conducts interviews and hires permanent and seasonal personnel. Provides new employee orientation. Assures effective employee development and training, and establishes learning contracts as appropriate. Assigns and schedules work. Develops performance standards and conducts performance reviews or evaluation of work for subordinates. The incumbent must be knowledgeable in Labor Relations, Employee Relations, Equal Employment Opportunity, and Civil Rights regulations in order to assure equity and fairness to a diverse workforce. Completes annual and quarterly reporting requirements, and assures staff completes all mandatory EEO and Civil Rights training. Educates staff on departmental and agency Civil Rights policies. Facilitates special emphasis programs in order to promote EEO initiatives. Initiates disciplinary actions when warranted and consults with Employee Relations for advice. Approves/denies leave requests, and employees' Time and Attendance records. Proposes and approves awards and other employee recognition. Initiates and approves personnel actions, within grade increase actions, validates probationary period completion. Assures that pesticide certification, defensive driver certification, SCBA certification and other medical testing is current and appropriate for each employee. Must have familiarity with OSHA standards and basic OWCP procedures. Incumbent is familiar with agency initiatives to promote the Employee Assistance Plan (EAP), Work Life Wellness (WLW) and safety and health programs.

Financial Management: Conducts annual and ongoing planning of operations, including forecasting future expenses. Develops a multi-faceted budget, and considers allocation of funds and tracking/status of funds. Manages all aspects of cooperative agreement funding within the assigned state(s). Establishes MOUs/MOAs as necessary, and updates these documents as

needed. Approves travel vouchers. Monitors procurement activity. The incumbent oversees the accuracy of the state(s)' PCMS, FFIS, Trvl, Brio and TUMS electronic records.

Property Management: In accordance with MRP-BS' Realty section or the General Services Administration (GSA), the incumbent negotiates and enters into lease agreements. Regularly monitors the state(s)' space requirements. The incumbent is the Accountable Officer for vehicles, as well as property of value of \$5,000 or more. Develops and maintains an inventory and reviews it on an annual basis. Enters into contracts or initiates purchase orders which enhance daily operations.

FACTOR LEVELS

1. Knowledge Required by the Position – Professional and expert knowledge of biological and agricultural science, principles and concepts in order to be recognized as the technical authority for the full range of state program activities and emergency issues. Knowledge of effective management and utilization of resources in accordance with relative priorities, available funds, and long-range needs. Comprehensive and expert knowledge of PPQ policies, procedures and regulations are key in the development and administration of effective organizational performance measures used to oversee the entire state's operations. Must have extensive analytical and project management skills in order to manage a variety of concurrent multi-faceted projects. Presents complex and often controversial information in a professional and persuasive manner through oral and written presentations.

The position requires Comprehensive knowledge of databases that contain data applicable to pest risk analyses such as PPQ's Global Pest and Disease Database, NAPIS, Emergency Action Notification, etc. Complete and thorough knowledge of regulatory tools to manage complex pest problems including compliance with applicable Federal and State environmental regulations.

ILLUSTRATIONS: 1) Grasshopper control program requires knowledge of NEPA and FIFRA requirements of pesticide application, environmental assessments, public hearings, etc. 2) Noxious weed control program requires knowledge of biocontrol or pesticide use and applicable environmental implications.

Knowledge of Labor Relations, Employee Relations, EEO and Civil Rights regulations, personnel management, budgeting and financial management and property/ space management.

2. Supervisory Controls – Receives broad program and administrative guidance from the Associate Regional Director. The incumbent has full responsibility for planning and organizing work, determining methodologies and priorities. Independently plans and carries out projects within broadly defined objectives. Supervisor considers employee's work to be technically authoritative and sound and is normally acceptable without change. Work is reviewed for accomplishments and adherence to laws, policies and procedures.

3. Guidelines – Guidelines are broadly stated Federal and agency regulations, strategic plans, policy statements, manuals and directives. For much of the work there are little or no written, standardized guidelines to direct the work. Guidelines and regulations may be in conflict which requires SPHD to develop strategies and obtain waivers which minimize the risk to the Agency. The incumbent exercises independent judgment and originality in developing and/or evaluating the state program work plans to ensure they are technically sound and will resolve difficult or unusual problems. Operates with considerable autonomy and authority in making decisions for the state.

ILLUSTRATIONS: Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), regulations of other Federal entities, e.g., OSHA, EPA, pesticide labels, etc., Agency administrative and program manuals, emergency program manuals.

4. Complexity – The incumbent provides a varied and diverse coordination of work assignments which involve highly complex and technical direction. Requires managerial responsibility for all phases of cooperative programs and activities within the state(s). Plans, organizes and implements regulatory programs designed to detect, intercept, exclude, control and eradicate plant pests significant to the national economy.

Exercises a high degree of resourcefulness and creativity in planning and executing short- and long-term work plans that provide unique solutions to problems which preclude the application of standardized methods, e.g., reallocation of budget and personnel to meet changing priorities, working with industry to develop options that mitigate risks and resolves issues.

Supervises a staff comprised of professional, technical and administrative personnel that may include subordinate supervisors. Assigns work, conducts performance evaluations, proposes and implements disciplinary actions as warranted, approves leave, initiates personnel actions, oversees OWCP procedures, Employee Assistance Plan, Work Life Wellness, Safety and Health Programs, responds to EEO complaints, employee grievances, and union Unfair Labor Practice allegations

5. Scope and Effect – The purpose of the work is to mitigate risks associated with international trade of agricultural products and by products so that pests and diseases not known to occur in the United States are prevented from becoming established or are detected, eradicated or managed before they become serious threats to the agricultural and natural resources of the country. Responsibilities include a full range of management activities for the states(s) including planning, organizing and monitoring the state activities and multiple programs.

Primary responsibility is in the development and implementation of operation procedures, the initiation of guides for operating unit personnel, and the inspection and review of program execution.

A high degree of resourcefulness and ingenuity are required when devising or reviewing long- and short-range plans and solutions to problems of a unique or novel nature which preclude application of standardized methods. The technical and managerial expertise provided by the

incumbent in evaluating and overseeing the development and implementation of plans and guidelines, the coordination of the program areas, and the review and inspection of operating units affect management goals and objectives and the acceptance by the public and various interest groups of the overall PPQ program.

6. Personal Contacts – The incumbent has frequent contact with subordinates and significant interaction with key intra and interagency contacts and pest management professionals within USDA. Contacts include other government agencies, i.e., Department of Homeland Security, state, county and local authorities, extension service personnel, high ranking state Department of Agriculture administrators, organized industry and grower groups, environmental groups, state and federal elected officials, nursery and greenhouse owners and operators, cooperators, contractors, common carriers, Defense Department representatives, local military installations, customs brokers, farm organizations and operators, foreign plant protection officials, colleges and universities, research facilities and permit holders, Native American tribal representatives, and others in similar positions in related agencies or in private groups.

7. Purpose of Contacts - The purpose of contacts is to, plan, negotiate, direct and conduct cooperative program operations and to establish contacts with individuals and organizations that have specific interest in APHIS regulatory programs and policies. Establishment and maintenance of relationships with the varied contacts, some of whom may have opposing viewpoints and/or who apply pressure to further their specific goals, is critical to successful program delivery. Public forums and meetings with other officials, particularly with key Federal, State, County and local officials, often involve discussions of controversial technical points, clarification and explanation of requirements and policies, and commitments having important implications for overall agency programs and objectives.

Uses tact and diplomacy, technical expertise, program experience, and knowledge of programs, policies, regulations, and industry business practices to achieve an acceptable point of view or develop suitable alternative solutions to problems. Resistance is often encountered due to competing objectives and major resource limitations. The incumbent must have highly developed communication, negotiation and interpersonal skills in order to work with variety of contacts. The nature of the work involves a high degree of sensitivity in which the incumbent must be willing to make compromises while maintaining program integrity to gain needed program support from variety of stakeholders and present the program and Department in the most favorable public relations position.

At times, the incumbent must inform and/or defend programs at public meetings, interviews by the media, or to congressional contacts. Provides leadership in negotiations with cooperating state officials, industrial groups and other interested parties in the development, revision and adoption of agreements to affect cooperative agricultural programs for the state.

8. Physical Demands - The position is generally sedentary, although there is prolonged standing at times. Occasional field survey/investigations or collection trips require walking, bending, crouching and climbing for prolonged periods in rough terrain subject to a variety of weather conditions.

GS-401-13

A valid and current state driver's license is required. Must be able to perform work while wearing a respirator to oversee fumigations, and may be required to maintain certification to wear a respirator such as Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA). Must maintain a valid pesticide certification.

9. Work Environment - The work is performed in an office setting, with regular visits to field locations, laboratory settings and work stations. Travel occurs on a routine basis and visits to remote locations or isolated rural areas are often required. There are regular and recurring risks associated with working around and with chemicals.